

**COLUMBIA COUNTY
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**MEETING MINUTES
26 JANUARY 2009**

PRESENT:

J. Pierre Gontier, Chairman, Canaan
Dean Vander Schaaff, Livingston
Frances Szasz, Germantown
Anthony LaSalvia, Taghkanic
Karl Gabosh, Austerlitz
Ed Simonsen, Kinderhook
Kate Cashen, Claverack
Melissa Sorman, Gallatin
Karen Mort, Ghent
Matt de la Houssaye, City of Hudson
Harvey Weber, Copake
Dan Marcus, Stockport
Ed Van Nostrand, CC DOH

REGRETS:

Deirdre Henderson, Chatham
Theresa Mayhew, CC Coop. Ext.

STAFF:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner

CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Gontier opened the meeting at 7:00 pm and noted that a quorum (12 of 19 members) was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ed Simonsen made a motion to approve the unofficial meeting notes for December 2008 and seconded by Kate Cashen. Vote: All in favor.

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1) ***2008 EMC Annual Report:*** This document was distributed to members by email. Chairman Gontier reported that he will distribute the report to the Board of Supervisors' Planning & Economic Development Committee on 1/27/09. Ed Simonsen recommended a change to the report on the recommendation regarding a temporary air monitoring station to reflect that both the County Government Committee and the full Board of Supervisors adopted the recommendation unanimously. Mr. Vosburgh suggested revised

wording which was acceptable and he will make the change in time for the report to be distributed tomorrow.

- 2) ***New Board of Supervisors Committee:*** Chairman Gontier reported that the Planning Department (and EMC) would now be reporting to the Planning & Economic Development Committee of the Board of Supervisors. Staff will email a list of the committee members to the EMC.
- 3) ***Lafarge Cement Co. Project:*** Chairman Gontier reported on the meeting of the Community Liaison Committee set up by the company at which the preliminary results of the stack testing for mercury emissions were presented. Chairman Gontier provided a copy of the conclusions section which showed that based on the 2008 testing protocol, mercury emissions are in the range of 146-188 pounds per year. The application for the plant upgrade announced in 2008 should be submitted to NYSDEC shortly and the project is slated to proceed in spite of plant layoffs and recent economic turmoil. Ed Simonsen and Karl Gabosh initiated a discussion about whether the EMC could have representation on the Community Liaison Committee, since Chairman Gontier accepted a position on the committee as a Columbia County resident (see Sept. 2008 EMC minutes for background). As there was some confusion about this matter Chairman Gontier requested that this issue be tabled until the next meeting and this was agreeable to the membership. Mr. Vosburgh explained that he did not prepare a separate agenda for this meeting as the tentative agenda (consisting of issue updates and committee reports) was emailed to each member and his goal was to reduce copying costs.
- 4) ***Special Speaker:*** Chairman Gontier reported that Deirdre Henderson was successful in contacting Mr. Jay Bloomfield of NYSDEC to attend a future EMC meeting to speak on the DEC's water monitoring program and specific projects in Columbia County. Dan Marcus made a motion and seconded by Harvey Weber to schedule Mr. Bloomfield to speak at the February 2009 EMC meeting. Vote: All in favor. Mr. Vosburgh will extend the official invitation and confirmation. Ed Simonsen expressed concern that having a speaker would interfere with committees being able to continue their discussions due to the time taken for a speaker. Chairman Gontier reminded all that EMC committees are free to meet at any time and place convenient to its members. He added that EMC staff is available at regular meetings but not at committee meetings. This is a function of limited staff availability and the fact that committees bring recommendations only and it is the full council that takes action. He added that the third floor classroom of 401 State Street County Office Building is available but committees must contact Mr. Vosburgh so that he can make the room reservations for the committee.
- 5) ***Good Earthkeeping Award:*** Kate Cashen was contacted by a business woman who was interested in the award process. There was some discussion about the pros and cons of awarding the GEK award to a business so that they could use this in the marketing of the business. Chairman Gontier had spoken with Mark Burch about the 2008 GEK Award and both agreed that since no action had been taken in 2008 that we should focus on a

2009 award. Chairman Gontier promised to distribute the GEK award history of recipients and again pointed out that the 2008 committee was charged with developing a process for publicity and nominations.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1) ***Copake Water Study Presentation:*** Harvey Weber reported that on 2/12/09, Steve Windley of the NY Rural Water Association would be making a presentation on the Copake study at the Copake Town Hall.
- 2) ***Impacts of Development on Aquifers:*** Ed Simonsen reported he was contacted by a group in the Town of Schodack regarding the impact of commercial and industrial development projects along Rt 9 in Schodack and potential impacts for Columbia County. He suggested that there should be an “interested party” status for the EMC on such projects. Chairman Gontier said that he had been following the potential for the Dewey Loeffel landfill north of Nassau to impact water quality in the Valatie Kill. Harvey Weber again suggested that local governments in the southern part of Columbia County work together to fund a regional groundwater study similar to what is already available for northern Columbia County. He thought that Senator Gillibrand could be helpful in identification of grant funding. Chairman Gontier recommended that the Water Committee investigate this matter.
- 3) ***Other Issues:*** Ed Simonsen reported he attended the Hudson Valley Economic Summit hosted by Congresswoman Gillebrand in Hyde Park. He mentioned that he learned that communication towers enjoy certain protections against local government regulations but that wind turbine projects are subject to local government regulations. Tony LaSalvia mentioned an article about the need for local governments to prepare for “peak oil.” Chairman Gontier said that he would like to see NYSERDA support for geothermal energy.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Minutes prepared by:

Roland R. Vosburgh, Principal Planner